

NASTY NAKED NATURE

WHO WILL ADMIT GOD IS TRUE?

“Who can understand his errors?” Psalm 19:12.

*“This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is **full of evil**, and **madness is in their heart** while they live, and after that, they go to the dead.”* Eccl. 9:3

By Pastor Del Wray

WHAT WE KNOW IS AS NOTHING when compared with what we know not. The sea of wisdom has cast up a shell or two upon our shore, but its vast depths have never known the footstep of the seeker. Even in natural things, we know but the surface of matters. He that has traveled the wide world over, and has descended into its deepest mines, must yet be aware that he has viewed but a part of the mere crust of this world; that as for its vast center, its mysterious fires, and molten secret, the mind of man hath not as yet conceived them. If you will turn your eyes above, the astronomer will tell you that the undiscovered stars, that the vast mass of worlds which form the milky way and the abundant masses of nebulae, that those vast clusters of unknown worlds, as infinitely exceed the little that we can explore, as a mountain exceeds a grain of sand. All the knowledge which the wisest men can possibly attain in a whole lifetime is no more than what the child may take up from the sea with his tiny cup, compared with the boundless waters which fill their channels to the brim. Why, when we are at the wisest, we have but come to the threshold of knowledge, we have taken but one step in that race of discovery which we may have to pursue throughout all eternity. This is equally the case with regard to things of the heart and the spiritual things which concern this little world called man. We know nothing but the surface of things. Whether I talk to you of God, of his attributes, of Christ, of his atonement, or of ourselves and our sin, I must confess that as yet we know nothing but the exterior; that we cannot comprehend the length, the breadth, the height of any one of these matters.

My exegesis this morning has been the primary interest of my entire fifty-seven-year ministry. It started back as a teenager when I was only sixteen years old. An older brother had taken his own life and died in my arms as I carried him into the emergency room of the Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News, VA. Such a trauma forced me to try and find out why? No one could answer me. So, I cried out to God, who I did not know, and He gave me the answer. Now for over all these many years I've attempted to warn my fellow man by teaching them what God had revealed to me. Thus, it became my war cry about the hatred in the heart of fallen man. **MY WAR WITH MAN'S NASTY NAKED NATURE:** That's my subject matter here: Our own sin, and the vileness of our own human nature, is one which we sometimes think we know, but of which we may always be quite sure that we have only begun to learn, and that when we have learned the most we shall ever know on earth, the question will still be how little is it that we really know?

Bewail the man who will not unclot his own heart, strip it bare and acknowledge the corruptness he finds there!!! Jesus does it for us, Mark 7:20-23.

“And he said, that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit,

lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Solomon, the wisest and richest man who ever lived in all his glory and after a lifetime of seeking all there was to know about life came to the conclusion in his own heart and said:

"I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts" Eccl. 4:3.

Solomon concluded that man is nothing more than a brute beast and must return to the dirt of the ground. That is the summation as God wants all men to know that they are nothing more than "beasts," a brute beast and will return to the earth. Why can't we humans wrap our heads around that? And take all measures to do all we can to protect ourselves and our neighbors from its depth of vileness and danger? Who will admit what God says about our nasty naked nature is true? No one, we all call God a liar and our very hearts deceive us. Our conscientious void of understanding, and we've baked our convictions. We are no good except for the gift that God has given us, His Son, Jesus Christ.

"WHO CAN UNDERSTAND HIS OWN NATURE?"

Thanks to the advice of my pastor who admonished me as a young preacher to read the writings of Baptist preachers over one hundred years old. It is to that admonishment that has cemented my convictions and made the Bible a living breathing library of Truth. Such men like G. Campbell Morgan, George W. Truett, B. H. Carroll, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Hadden Spurgeon, and the great Independent Southern expositor, Dr. J. Frank Norris. Also, I must give credit to my pastor Dr. Harold Bennett Sightler and my dear friend, who has proceeded me home, Dr. Peter Sturgis Ruckman for their personal encouragement in helping me expose the greatest danger to all of mankind. The wickedness of our own hearts. From all these men and all true believers, like the Apostle Paul, we confess, we are the "chief of sinners." Their writings and personal testimonies enforcing my own convictions of the subject herein.

Who can know the sin in his own heart? Can one number or determine the depth of evil in his own heart? We all acknowledge that we have faults. Surely we are not so proud as to imagine ourselves to be perfect. If we pretend to perfection we are utterly ignorant, for every profession of human perfection arises from perfect ignorance. Any notion that we are free from sin should at once discover to us that we abound in it. To vindicate my boast of perfection, I must deny the Word of God, forget the law, and exalt myself above the testimony of truth. Therefore, I say, we are willing to confess that we have many sins, yet who amongst us can understand them? Who knows precisely how far a thing may be a sin which we imagine to be a virtue? Who among us can define how much of iniquity is mingled with our uprightness, how much of unrighteousness with our righteousness? Who is able to detect the component parts of every action, so as to see the proportion of motive which would constitute it right or wrong? He is indeed a crafty man who should be able to unmask an action and divide it into essential motives which are its component parts. Where we think we are right, who knows but what we may be wrong? Where even with the strictest scrutiny we have arrived at the conclusion that we have done a good thing, which among us is quite sure that he has not been mistaken? May not the apparent good be as marred with an internal motive as to become a real evil?

Who again can understand his sins so as always to detect a fault when it has been committed? The shades of evil are perceptible to God, but not always perceptible to us. Our eye has been so blinded and its vision so ruined by the fall, the absolute black of sin we can detect, but the shades of its darkness we are unable to discern. And yet the slightest shadow of sin is perceptible to God, and that very shade divides us from the Perfect One and causes us to be guilty of sin. Who amongst us has that keen method of judging

himself, so that he shall be able to discover the first trace of evil? "Who can understand his faults?" Surely no man will claim wisdom as profound as this. But to come to more common matters by which perhaps we may the more understand our text. Who can understand the number of his faults? The mightiest mind could not count the sins of a single day. As the multitude of sparks from a furnace, so innumerable are the iniquities of one day. We might sooner tell the grains of sand on the sea-shore, than the iniquities of one man's life. "A life most purged and pure is still as full of sin as the sea is full of salt." And who is he that can weigh the salt of the sea, or can detect it as it mingles with every liquid particle? But if he could do this, he could not tell how vast an amount of evil saturates our entire life, and how innumerable are those deeds, and thoughts, and words of disobedience, which have cast us out from the presence of God, and caused him to abhor the creatures which his own hands have made.

Again, even if we could tell the number of human sins, who, in the next place, could ever estimate their guilt? Before God's mind the guilt of one sin, and such a one as we foolishly call a little one, the guilt of one sin merits His eternal displeasure. Until that one iniquity is washed out with blood, God cannot accept the soul and take it to His heart as His own offspring. Though He has made the man, and is infinitely benevolent, yet His sense of justice is so strong, and stern, and inflexible, that from His presence He must drive out His dearest child if one single sin should remain unforgiven. Who then amongst us can tell the guilt of guilt, the heinousness of that ungrateful rebellion which man has commenced and carried on against his wise and gracious Creator? Sin, like hell, is a bottomless pit! Oh, brethren, there never lived a man yet who really knew how guilty he was; for if such a being could be fully conscious of all his own guilt, he would carry hell in his bowels. Nay, I often think that scarcely can the damned in perdition know all the guilt of their iniquity, or else even their furnace might be heated seven times hotter, and Tophet's streams must be enlarged to an immeasurable depth. The hell which is contained in a single evil thought is unutterable and unimaginable. God only knows the blackness, the horror of darkness, which is condensed into the thought of evil.

And then again, this passage of Scripture should convey to us this idea. Who can understand the peculiar aggravation of his own transgression? Now, answering the question for myself, I feel that as a minister of Christ I cannot understand my sins. Placed where multitudes listen to the Word from my lips, my responsibilities are so tremendous, that the moment I think of them, a mountain presses upon my soul. There have been times when I have wished to imitate Jonah and take ship and flee away from the work which God has thrust upon me; for I am conscious that I have not served him as I ought. When I have preached most earnestly, I go to my home and repent that I have preached in so heartless a manner. When I have wept over your souls, and when I have agonized in prayer, I have yet been conscious that I have not wrestled with God as I ought to have wrestled, and that I have not felt for your souls as I ought to feel. The faults which a man may commit in the ministry are incalculable. There is no hell I think that shall be hot enough for the man who is unfaithful here. There can be no curse too horrible to be hurled upon the head of that man who leads others astray when he ought to guide them in the path of peace, or who deals with sacred things as if they were matters of no weight, and of slight importance. I bring here any minister of Christ that lives, and if he be a man really filled with the Holy Spirit, he will tell you that when he is bowed down with the solemnity of his office, he would give up the work if he dares; that if it were not for something beyond, mysterious impulses that drive him forward, he would take his hand from the plough and leave the field of battle. Lord, would you have mercy upon me? For, beyond all other men, I need mercy.

And now I single out any member of any congregation, mine or any other, and whatever be his or her position in life, whatever your education, or the peculiar providences through which you have passed, I will insist upon it that there is something special about your case which makes your sin such sin, that you cannot understand how vile it is. Perhaps you have had a pious mother who wept over you in your childhood and dedicated you to God when you were in your cradle. Your sin doubly sins. There is about it a scarlet hue which is not to be discovered in an ordinary criminal. You have been directed from your

youth up in the way of righteousness, and if you have gone astray, every step you have taken has been not a step to hell but a stride thither. You do not sin so cheaply as others. Other men's scores run up fast; but where there are dollars put down for other sinners there are hundreds put down for you because you know your duty but you do it not. He that breaks through a mother's bosom to hell goes to its lowest depths. There is in hell a degree of torture, and the deepest should surely be reserved for the man who leaps over a mother's prayers into perdition. Or you may never have this to account for, but you may have an equal aggravation. You have been at sea, sir. Many times you have been in danger of being shipwrecked. You have had miraculous escapes. Now, every one of these shipwrecks has been a warning to you. God has brought you to the gates of death, and you have promised that if he would but save your wretched soul that you would lead a fresh life, that you would begin to serve your Maker. You have lied to your God. Your sins before you uttered that vow was evil enough, but now you break not only the law but your own covenant which you voluntarily made with God in the home of sickness. You have, some of you perhaps, been thrown from a horse, or have been attacked by fever, or in other ways have been brought to the very gates of the grave. What solemnity is attached to your life now! He that rode in the charge of Bull Run and yet came back alive, saved alive where hundreds die, should from that time consider himself to be a God's man, saved by a singular providence for singular ends. But you too have had your escapes, if not quite so wonderful, yet certainly quite as special instances of God's goodness. And now, every sin you commit becomes unutterably wicked, and of you, I may say, "Who can understand his sins?"

But I might wear out the congregants by bringing up one by one. Here comes the father. Sir, your sins will be imitated by your children. You cannot, therefore, understand your faults because they are sins against your own offspring, sins against the children that have sprung from your own loins. Here is the magistrate. Sir, your sins are a peculiar dye, because, standing in your position, your character is watched and looked up to, and whatever you do become the excuse of other men. I bring up another man who holds no office in the state whatever, and who perhaps is little known among men. But, sir, you have received special grace from God, you have had the rich enjoyment of the light of your Savior's countenance; you have been poor, but he has made you rich, rich in faith. Now when you rebel against him, the sins of God's favorites are sins indeed. Iniquities committed by the people of God become as huge and as high as a mountain and reach the very stars. Who among us, then, can understand his sins: their special aggravations, their number, and their guilt, Lord, search us and know our ways!

Before a man could understand his sins there are several mysteries which he must know. But each one of these mysteries, I think, is beyond his knowledge, and consequently the understanding of the whole depth of the guilt of his sin must be quite beyond human power. Now the first mystery that man must understand is the fall.

THE FALL: Until I know how much all my powers are debased and depraved, how thoroughly my will is perverted and my judgment turned from its right channel, how really and essentially vicious my nature has become, it cannot be possible for me to know the whole extent of my guilt. Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil; yet who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron? Now, brethren, your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers; your sins the sparks. If you could count them, which you cannot do, yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities, eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your souls? Yet must you know this before you know the whole sinfulness of your nature. Our open sins are like the farmer's little sample which he brings to market. There are granaries full at home. The iniquities that we see are like the weeds upon the surface soil, but I have been told, and indeed have seen the truth of it, that if you dig six feet into the earth and turn up fresh soil, there will be found in that soil six feet deep the seeds of the weeds indigenous to the land. And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and center, we should find it as fully permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rotteness. The

fact is that man is a reeking mass of corruption. His whole soul is by nature so debased and so depraved, that no description which can be given to him even by inspired tongues can fully tell how base and vile a thing he is. An ancient writer said once, of the iniquity within, that it was like the stores of water which it is hidden in the depths of the earth. God once broke up the fountains of the great deep, and then they covered the mountains twenty cubits upward. If God should even withdraw his restraining grace, and break up in our hearts the whole fountains of the great depths of our iniquity, it would be a flood so hideous, that it would cover the highest tops of our hopes and the whole worm within us would be drowned in dread despair. Not a living thing could be found in this sea of evil. It would cover all, and swallow up the whole of our manhood. That old Roman who said "he would like to have a window into his heart that every man could see within it", did not know himself, for if he had had such a window he would soon have begged to have a pair of shutters, and he would have kept them shut up I am sure; for, could he ever have seen his own heart, he would have been driven raving mad. God, therefore, spares all eyes but his own that desperate sight, a naked human heart. Great God, here would we pause and cry, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part, thou shalt make me know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

A second thing which it will be needful for us to understand before we can comprehend our sins is God's law.

GOD'S LAW: If I just describe the law for a moment, you will very readily see that you can never hope by any means fully to understand it. The law of God, as we read it in the ten great commandments, seems very simple, very easy. When we come, however, to put even its naked precepts into practice, we find that it is quite impossible for us to keep them in the full. Our amazement, however, increases, when we find that the law does not mean merely what it says, but that it has a spiritual meaning, a hidden depth of matter which at first sight we do not discover. For instance, the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," means more than the mere act refers to fornication and uncleanness of any shape, both in the act, and word, and thought. Nay, to use our Savior's own exposition of it, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her committeth adultery already with her in his heart." So it is with every commandment. The bare letter is nothing, compared with the whole stupendous meaning and severe strictness of the rule. The commandments, if I may so speak, are like the stars. When seen with the naked eye, they appear to be brilliant points; if we could draw near to them, we should see them be infinite worlds, greater than even our sun, stupendous though it is. So is it with the law of God. It seems to be but a luminous point because we see it at a distance, but when we come nearer where Christ stood, and estimate the lair as he saw it, and then we find it is vast, immeasurable. "The commandment is exceeding broad." Think then for a moment of the spirituality of the law, its extent and strictness. The Law of Moses condemns for offense, without hope of pardon, and sin, like a millstone, is bound around the sinner's neck, and he is cast into the depths. Nay, the law deals with sins of thought; the imagination of evil is a sin. The transit of sin across the heart leaves the stain of impurity behind it. This law, too, extends to every act, tracks us to our bedrooms, goes with us to our house of prayer, and if it discovers so much as the least sign of wavering from the strict path of integrity, it condemns us. When we think of the law of God we may well be overwhelmed with horror, and sit down and say, "God be merciful to me, for to keep this law is utterly beyond power; even to know the fullness of its meaning is not within finite capacity. Therefore great God cleanses us from our secret faults, save us by thy grace, for by the law we never can be saved."

Nor yet, even if you should know these two things, should you be able to answer this question; for, to comprehend our own sins, we must be able to understand the perfection of God.

THE PERFECTION OF GOD: To get a full idea of how black sin is, you must know how bright God is. We see things by contrast. You will at one time have pointed out to you a color which appears perfectly white, yet it is possible for something to be whiter still; and when you think you have arrived at the very

perfection of whiteness, you discover that there is still a shade and that something may be found that is blanched to a higher state of purity. When we put ourselves in comparison with the apostles, we discover that we are not what we should be; but if we could bring ourselves side by side with the purity of God, O what spots! What defilements should we find on our surface! While the spotless God stands before us as the bright background to set out the blackness of our iniquitous souls. Ere you can know your own defilement those eyes must look into the unutterable glory of the divine character. Him before whom the heavens are not pure, who chargeth the angels with folly, you must know him before you can know you. Hope not, then, that you shalt ever attain to a perfect knowledge of the depths of your own sin.

Again: he that would understand his sins in all their heinousness must know the mystery of hell.

THE MYSTERY OF HELL: We must walk that burning marl, stand in the midst of the blazing flame; nay, feel it. We must feel the venom of destruction as it makes the blood boil in each vein. We must find our nerves converted into fiery roads, along which the hot feet of pain shall travel, hurrying with lightning pace. We must know the extent of eternity, and then the unutterable agony of that eternal wrath of God which abides on the souls of the lost, before we can know the awful character of sin. You may best measure the sin by the punishment. Depend on upon it; God will not put his creatures to a single pang more pain than justice absolutely demands. There is no such thing as sovereign torture or sovereign hell. God does not stretch his creature on the rack like a tyrant; he will give him but what he deserves, and, perhaps, even when God's wrath is fiercest against sin, he does not punish the sinner so much as his sin might warrant, but only as much as it demands. At any rate, there will not be a grain more of wormwood in the cup of the lost than naked justice absolutely requires. Then, O my God if your creatures are to be cast into a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, if into a pit that is bottomless lost souls must be driven, then what a hideous thing sin must be. I cannot understand that torture; therefore I cannot understand the guilt that deserves it. Yet am I conscious that my guilt deserves it, or else God would not have threatened me with it, for He is just and I am unjust; He is holy and righteous, and good, and He would not punish me more for my sin than my sin absolutely required.

Yet once more, a last endeavor to impress this question of my Scripture verse upon your heart. Harold Sightler said very sweetly: "He that would know sin let him repair to Olivet, and he shall see a man so wrung with pain that all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Sin was that press and vice which forced pain to hunt its cruel food through every vein." You must see Christ sweating as it were great drops of blood; you must have a vision of him with the spittle running down his cheeks, with his back torn by the accursed whip; you must see him going on his dolorous journey through Jerusalem; you must behold him fainting under the weight of the cross; you must see him as the nails are driven through his hands and through his feet; your tearful eye must watch the throes of the grim agonies of death; you must drink of the bitterness of wormwood mingled with the gall; you must stand in the thick darkness with your own soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; you must cry yourself that awful earth-startling cry of "Lama Sabachthani;" you too must, as he did, feel all that weight of God's almighty wrath; you must be ground between the upper and nether millstones of wrath and vengeance; you must drink of the cup to its last dregs, and like Jesus' cry, "It is finished;" or else you can never know all your sins, and understand the guilt of your sin. But this is clearly impossible and undesirable. Who wishes to suffer as the Saviour suffered, all the horrors which he endured? He, blessed be his name, has suffered for us. The cup is emptied now. The cross stands up no longer for us to die thereon. Quenched is the flame of hell for every true believer. Now no more is God angry with his people, for He has put away sin through the sacrifice of himself. Yet I say it again before we could know sin we must know the whole of that awful wrath of God which Jesus Christ endured. Who, then, can understand his sins?

Behold then the folly of all hope of salvation by our own righteousness. Come, you that trust in yourselves. Look to Sinai, all together in a smoke, and tremble and despair. You say that you have good works. Alas, your good works are evil, but have you no evil ones? Do you deny that you have ever

sinned? Ah! My reader, are you so love-struck as to declare that your thoughts have all been chaste, your desires all heavenly, and your actions all pure? Oh, man, if all this were true, if you had no sins of commission, yet, what about your sins of omission? Have you done all that God and that your brother could require of you? Oh, these sins of omission! The hungry that you have not fed, the naked that you have not clothed, the sick ones, and those that are in prison that you have not visited, remember it was for sins like these that the goats were found at the left hand at last. Not for what they did do, but for what they did not do, the things they left undone, these men were put into the lake of fire. Oh, my hearer, have done your boasting; pull out those plumes from your head you rebellious one, and come with your glory dragging in the mire, and with your bright garment stained, and now confess that you have no righteousness of your own, that you are all unclean, and full of sin. Dear neighbor, I am nothing except what God has given me in Jesus Christ. And that is exactly what He wants to do for you.

If but this one practical message were learned, it would be sufficient as a blessing conveyed to every spirit that had learned it. And now we come to another, how vain are all hopes of salvation by our feelings. We have a new legalism to fight within our Christian churches. There are men and women who think they must not believe on Christ till they feel their sins up to a most agonizing point. They think they must feel a certain degree of sorrow, a high degree of sense of need before they may come to Christ at all. Ah! Soul, if you are never saved till you know all your guilt, you wilt never be saved, for you can never know it. I have shown you the utter impossibility of you ever being able to discover the whole heights and depths of your own lost state. Man, don't try to be saved by your feelings. Come and take Christ just as He is, and come to Him just as you are. "But, Sir, may I come? I am not invited to come." Yes, you are, "Whosoever will let him come." Don't believe that the invitations of the gospel are given only to characters; they are, some of them, unlimited invitations. It is the duty of every man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is every man's solemn duty to trust Christ, not because of anything that man is, or is not, but because he is commanded to do it. "This is the command of God that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

Trust now in his precious blood, you are saved, and you shall see his face in heaven. The despair of being saved by feeling, since perfect feelings are impossible and a perfect knowledge of our own guilt is quite beyond our reach. Come, then to Christ, hard-hearted as you are, and take him to be the Savior of your hard heart. Come, poor stony conscience, poor icy soul, come as you are; He will warm you, he will melt your heart.

Another sweet plea is this: what grace is this which pardons sin? The sin that is so great that the most enlarged capacity cannot comprehend its heinousness. Oh! I know my sins reach from the east even to the west, that aiming at the eternal skies they rise like pointed mountains towards heaven. But then, blessed be the name of God, the blood of Christ is wider than my sin. That shoreless flood of Jesus' merit is deeper than the heights of mine iniquities. My sin may be great, but His merit is greater still I cannot conceive my own guilt, much less express it, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Infinite guilt is sure, but infinite pardon is surer. Boundless iniquities so true, but boundless merits to cover all is truer. What if your sins were greater than heaven's breadth, yet Christ is greater than heaven. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him. If your sins were deeper than the bottomless hell, yet Christ's atonement is deeper still, for he descended deeper than ever man himself as yet hath dived, even damned men in all the horror of their agony, for Christ went to the end of punishment, and deeper your sins can never plunge. Oh! Boundless love that covers all my faults, that covers all my errors and covers all my sins. My poor reader and hearer believe on Christ now. God help you to believe. May the Spirit now enable you to trust in Jesus? You cannot save yourself. All hopes of self-salvation are delusive. Now give up, have done with self, and take Christ. Just as you are, drop into his arms. He will take you; he will save you. He died to do it, and he lives to accomplish it. He will not lose the spirit that casts itself into His hands and makes Him his all in all.

Don't be like the religious impostors that waste their lives and come to the end of life only to find out that they've damned their own souls:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matt. 7:13-14

WE ARE NOTHING EXCEPT WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN JESUS CHRIST!

MAY THIS ENCOURAGE YOU TO COME TO CHRIST!